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GENEROSITY IS GODLIKE.

Church Support Not Charity—Missions
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Godlikeness—Wise and Unwise Char-
ity—Charity's Rewards, Present and
Future—Must Be Displeasing to Al-
mighty to Have Begging Done In His
Name and Without His Authority.



PASTOR RUSSELL

August 30.—Pastor C. T. Russell, widely known through his PHOTODRAMA OF CREATION, which is being seen by thousands everywhere—widely known, also, by his sermons in hundreds of newspapers, by his books and by his weekly BIBLE STUDIES, preached today from the text: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again."—Proverbs 19:17.

The fact that I have been preaching for thirty-eight years and yet have never taken up a collection nor made any appeal for money in connection with my work may have led some to the erroneous conclusion that I am opposed to charities, said the Pastor. Nothing could be further from the truth. During those thirty-eight years many thousands of dollars have passed through my hands—voluntary gifts from grateful souls, for the spread of the Good Tidings of great joy which shall yet be unto all people. Moreover, it is my conviction that no one could be an acceptable Christian unless he possessed the spirit of charity, benevolence, unless he really loved to give for good purposes—for the glory of God, for the benefit of his fellows.

The Pastor declared that from his viewpoint missionary enterprises might properly be considered charities—but not so Church enterprises. The Church, he claimed, is not a missionary society for the world's benefit, but an arrangement for the benefit of the Church members. Hence each member of this brotherhood should consider himself in duty bound to co-operate to the extent of his ability in providing the necessary expenses connected with the meeting-place—light, janitorage, etc.—the blessings and comforts of which he enjoys. Yet even in this there should be nothing akin to coercion or demand. If the sum-total were found insufficient, more humble quarters at less expense should be engaged as soon as possible.

It is wrong, said the Pastor, for a congregation to aspire to a fine, expensive auditorium and general establishment beyond their own means. It is wrong for them to go outside and solicit money from the world, the flesh and the Devil, in the name of God! Surely God never authorized such a proceeding; for just as surely as it would be offensive to any right-minded person to have solicitation for money made in his name, so it must be to the Almighty to have begging done in His name without His authority.

The Bible distinctly tells that God is very rich. No rich man would approve of begging done in his name, especially from the poor. And for us to promise God's special blessing and favor in return for filthy lucre is an outrage against Divine Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. The Lord's own Word is that all the gold and silver are His.

But, we are told, if solicitations, collections, pew rents, fairs, festivals, etc., were abandoned, all the churches would be closed, except such as are beneficially endowed. If this were the case, we believe, that nevertheless, the Church would gain respect and influence with the world which would more than compensate. If one-half the churches disorganized, the other half, rightly supported in accordance with the Divine precepts and the example of Jesus and His Apostles, would accomplish more good than would twice the number under present conditions, in which they have considerable of the world's scorn. That scorn directly and indirectly reflects against the Divine Character and the Divine Word.

In illustration of this conviction the Pastor cited the fact that the Divine blessing has been with his work. He admitted that the money passing through his hands is really as nothing compared with the large sum spent annually by the various Christian denominations. He admitted that the International Bible Students Association owns no valuable real estate and cannot boast of large bank accounts. They have followed the plan of using actively and economically in God's service whatever money has voluntarily come to them—not seeking to build temples made with hands, but to prepare the living stones for the glorious Temple of Christ beyond the veil.

Under this arrangement, they never spend more than what is in hand. God has blessed the work, and the unsolicited donations increase year by year. The activities incidental to the use of these funds extend now to all parts of the earth, preaching the Message of

God's Love and helping to open eyes of understanding long blinded by creeds, philosophies "so called," and misunderstandings of the Word of God.

Generosity Is Godlike.

In declaring generosity to be Godlike, the Pastor wished his hearers not to misunderstand him to mean that gifts of money could purchase Divine favor and relationship. He trusted that his views, following closely the Scripture lines on this subject, are widely known; namely, that there is only one way into the Father's favor and into His family—the way of renunciation of sin and turning to righteousness, of acceptance of Christ's redemptive work and of full consecration through Him to do the Father's will, even unto death. Only such spirit-begotten ones are acknowledged in the Bible as children of God. All others are Scripturally described to be "aliens, strangers and foreigners" from God and His promises.

But the speaker wished all to discern that there are noble-minded souls who have not entered this "narrow gate" and who are not, therefore, children of God, but who, nevertheless, by nature possess traits of Godlikeness, notwithstanding their share in the fall. Benevolence, generosity, charity in its true sense, wherever found is a trace of the Godlikeness in which our first parents were created. Noble-minded people of the world in practising charity are imitating one of the highest qualities of the Divine character, and forthwith they experience a blessing whenever they exercise their charitable instincts.

As for Christians, we find, as the Apostle declares, that they are naturally a varied assortment; for they possess, some more and some less, of the Godlike qualities, and some more and some less, of the depraved traits. But following their begetting of the Holy Spirit, these become more and more generous, benevolent, charitable. Under the instruction and discipline of the School of Christ, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. It is more and more shed abroad in their hearts. For them the great lesson of life is this lesson of love, charity, sympathy for the Truth, for one another and for the world.

Blessed In Their Giving.

God is the great Giver, of whom the Apostle says, "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights." The Lord Jesus Christ exemplified to mankind God's great Love, and showed that He Himself possessed the same Spirit, the same loving, generous, kind nature—so much so that He laid down His life on behalf of half of our sinner-race. It is required of the Church that each one shall be imbued with this same loving disposition as their Savior had; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." That love not only left the Heavenly glory and riches on behalf of the sinner, but additionally endured the Cross and its shame.

The Apostle John urges all Christ's followers that, cultivating the Master's noble, generous, loving Spirit, they ought also to lay down their lives for the brethren. They ought also to be ready to count all things but loss and dross, gladly to be renounced in the interest of the Lord's Cause. With every sacrifice, these receive more than compensation of Divine favor, besides the Master's promise of eternal life on the Heavenly plane.—Mark 10:30.

And now let us think of the world—especially of those noble, generous souls who, possessing something of the original Godlikeness, take pleasure, not in cheating their fellow men, not in doing everything injurious to the interests of others, but frequently in contributing to the relief of suffering, to the maintenance and education of orphans, the protection and comfort of widows, as well as to hospitals, infirmaries, etc. Is there any provision of blessing for these?

These noble-minded, charitable people are being blessed by their generous course; for there is a Law of Retribution continually in operation.

The principle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," applies to them as well as to the Church. As these noble souls daily become more loving, more generous, they are developing characters which in the future will be helpful to them. If they do not come into vital relationship with God through Christ at the present time, if they have not the hearing ear and the responsive heart now, nevertheless the time is coming when they will share in the world's blessing. It will be a great blessing, even though far inferior to that of the Church, as human restitution is inferior to spirit perfection through the First Resurrection.

When Messiah's Kingdom shall have been inaugurated and the whole world shall enter upon its trial for life or death everlasting, noble souls that have exercised benevolence, Godlikeness, will be in advance of others who, even with similar noble heritage, have failed to use, exercise, develop, this quality of benevolence, or charity. In other words, liberal souls not only experience a blessing in the present time, but thereby prepare themselves for greater blessings by and by.

Wise and Unwise Charities.

Since the blessing of charity comes to the individual as a result of the exercise of that quality, it follows that the giver gets a blessing whether the gift is wisely bestowed or not, and whether the receiver is profited or not. Hence, even though we may subsequently know that some of our gifts were unwisely or unworthily bestowed, we need not mourn, but rather realize that according to the Divine arrangement we have had a blessing, nevertheless. However, no one will dispute that the spirit of a sound mind should be used in connection with our charities, as well as in all our other affairs. Very frequently many of the pro-

visions for the poor in our day are no longer rated as private charities, but as public, and even sometimes as mere justice. For instance, provisions for the blind, for the infirm, asylums for the mentally weak and hospitals for the sick, are now considered to be a duty of the community and are provided for by general taxation. Thus benevolence is asserting itself, and combining and dividing its honors with justice. That which previously would have been left to a few of generous disposition is now provided for by the whole community—generous and selfish.

Who can question that this is an advanced step; and, if so, that all should co-operate along those lines and cease to encourage mendicancy, the solicitation of alms, the appeal to generosity through the eye?

If our social arrangement has provided for such cases, it should be considered a misdemeanor to ignore such provision. If our public charities, hospitals, city Homes, etc., be not upon such a scale as have the approval of generous, reasonable minds, then the entire system calls for reorganization, that it may be made right, proper, suitable for the use of any having need thereof. The community should be ashamed to provide for others what they would not be willing to accept for themselves under the same circumstances. The Pastor expressed a hope that these reasonable sentiments might through the public press be brought effectively to the attention of Poor Boards, Charity Committees, etc.

God Loves Cheerful Givers.

God's gifts are given cheerfully. The Bible tells us that He appreciates a cheerful giver—one who enters into the spirit of his gift, who accompanies the coin with a cheerful word, a kind look, helpful advice, or what not. If these cheerful givers belong to God's Family, the Father will love them and manifest His love for them. Their cultivation of His Spirit will bring them into closer relationship with the Almighty.

How generously shall we give? some may ask. The answer is: God has given us our minds, our judgments, wherewith to decide all questions. The need of the needy, the amount of our surplus, the claims of others upon that surplus—all these things should, properly enough, enter into our calculations and help us to decide how much should properly be given to charity.

In order to get a great blessing out of our charities, we should give until we feel it. The person who gives one coin out of a thousand—which he would never miss—is not likely to get therefrom a great blessing. He must continue in the exercise of this Godlike disposition until his gifts shall necessitate his restraining of his own luxuries or, perhaps, his own comforts. Then he begins to be really charitable and to really appreciate some of the joys which the Lord designs shall be granted to generous souls.

Giving Related to Forgiving.

Every advance in true charity has a bearing upon the character. Whoever is generous with his fellows will find it more and more easy to be forgiving toward those who do him injury. Charity, love, benevolence, affects the entire being. It tends to make its possessor more kind and gentle in word, action and judgment. It develops his sympathy. All this is a development of Godlikeness. The Apostles point this out in order, associating meekness, gentleness, faithfulness, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, charity—all elements of the one great quality of Love.

The Father's Holy Spirit of Love is also the Spirit of His Son, our Redeemer; and all who will be accepted as members of the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, we are assured, must be copies of God's dear Son. They must all have this kind, generous, charitable quality. We are not meaning to say that such a quality would be acceptable to God without Christ, our Redeemer; for the Bible clearly sets forth that no man cometh to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). But the Son's method of preparing us for the eternal glory, after we have become His disciples, is by instructing us along the lines of the development of this Divine Character-likeness. If Christians could realize this more fully, how kind and charitable they would be!

The Lord would have His people wholehearted in their sympathies—broad, deep, generous. To give either money, forgiveness, sympathy or any other good thing grudgingly, half-heartedly, is to spoil the matter. True, many of the Lord's people are by nature very narrow, mean, spiteful, contrary to what the Lord would approve. But He is willing to overlook all the natural defects if He sees the right heart-condition—sees that we are endeavoring to the extent of our ability to overcome our natural weaknesses and to put on Christ.

With us the first lesson is to learn to look into the mirror of the Lord's Word and there to note our natural meanness and contrariness to God's Character-likeness. As we thus behold in God's Word the true standard of character, contrast with it our own and seek to copy the Lord, we shall, as the Apostle declares, be changed from glory to glory. Step by step the transforming work will proceed.

We shall never be able to bring our bodies to that perfection of word, act and look which we desire; for our desires are perfect, copied from the grand Example of our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Lord, while our bodies are imperfect through the fall. We are encouraged, however, by the Scriptural assurance that God will look on the heart, and note our efforts to conform to the Heavenly Pattern. We shall be judged, not according to the flesh, but according to the intention. Thus alone can we have the righteousness of the Law fulfilled in us—while walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Wives! Mothers! Daughters! Just a Word With You!

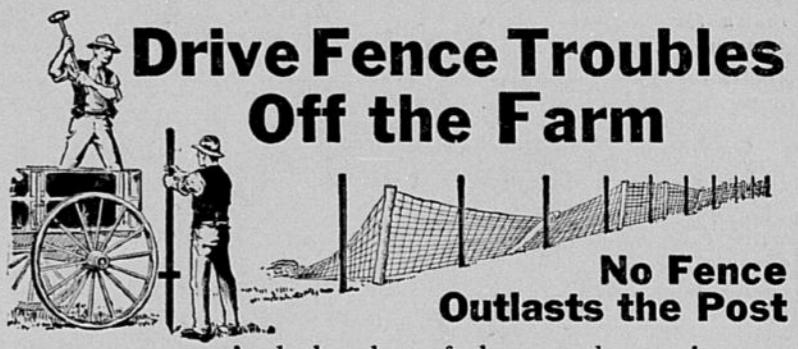
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